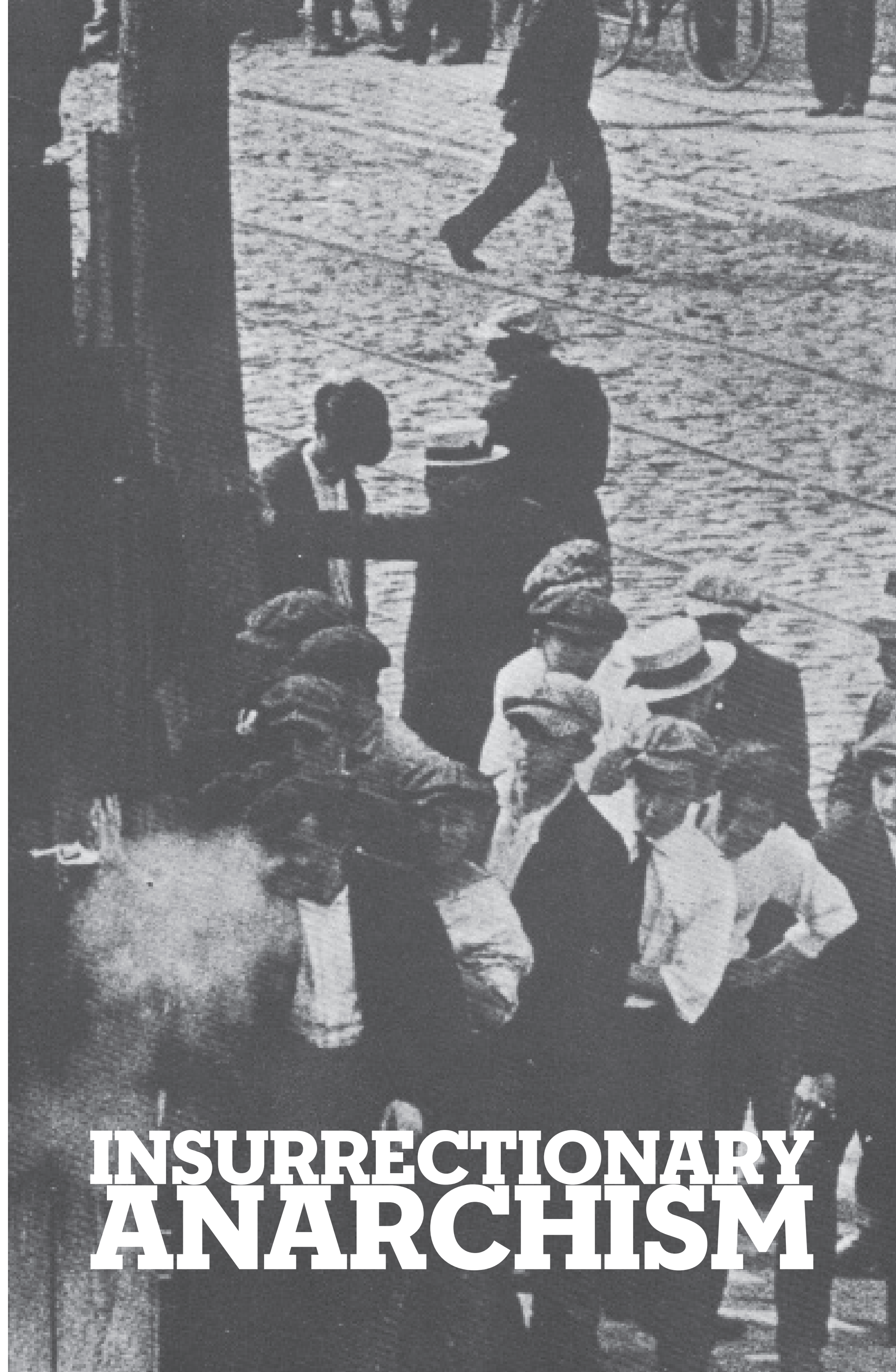
“ IT IS THE ACCUMULATION OF “PETTY” ACTS OF DEFIANCE AND REFUSAL THAT MAKE CRITICAL UPSURGES POSSIBLE. THEY ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR REVOLUTION BUT A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR IT. THAT IS WHY THE INSURRECTIONARY MOMENT INVARIABLY ESCALATES SO RAPIDLY - “AS IF FROM NOWHERE” - AND IS WHY REVOLUTIONARY ELITES (THE CLOWNISH RINGMASTERS OF THE VANGUARD) ALWAYS FIND THEMSELVES HOPELESSLY OVERTAKEN.

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INSURRECTIONARY ANARCHISM

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"The coming period will have little need of new theories. What it *will* need are demonstrations by example, this in the context of a reversal of perspective that is visible, tangible, rooted in objective reality. And it will need not speculation about ideas, but ideas themselves - ideas that can be refined by being put into play."

- Andréa Dorea

"It's easy. You can do it yourself. Alone or with a few trusted comrades. Complicated means are not necessary. Not even great technical knowledge. Capital is vulnerable. All you need is to be decided."

- Alfredo M. Bonanno

in a sequestered physical, cultural or social location; those areas that are least patrolled by authority. (Anarchist and eco-activist meetings are mostly conventions for police informers, wannabe reformist politicians and loonies.)

For those who look only on the surface of things, those seduced by the spectacular *image* of defiance, the strategy posed here might be seen as a retreat from "conventional" class struggle. But all things are precisely not as they seem; this is the very form that traditional successful class struggle has *always* taken. The clandestine, apparently innocuous, maybe even anti-political assembly provides the fluidity, the guerrilla mobility, for effective subversive action.

No Name, No Slogan

For us, there are immediate uses and gains in formations such as these; no leaders to round up, no hierarchical organisation to wield power over us in our name, no membership lists to investigate, no manifestos to denounce, no mediators to meet (and then join) the power holding elite. No public claims are made, no symbolic lines are drawn, no press statements to be deliberately misconstrued and trivialised by journalists. No platforms or programmes which the intellectuals can hijack as their exclusive property, no flag or banner to which to pledge a crass and sectarian allegiance.

Then what concrete forms will our subversion take? Well, the forms it *already* takes: theft, feigned ignorance (all the better to dissemble our intentions), shirking or careless labour, foot-dragging and the go-slow, zero work (with a little preparation we might come to enjoy the next depression), secret trade and production for sale (for barter - or even better for free), squatting, defaulting on all payments for anything, evasion of taxes, destruction of official records, sabotage and arson, assassination, impromptu riot (for the hell of it) and the détournement of State sponsored celebration into moments of joyous destruction.

If we were to undertake all this with the objective of attaining a complete self reliance in the satisfaction of all our needs and desires, we may well find it sufficient for the move from surviving within this system, to superseding it.

Let the daily celebration of life be but a dress rehearsal for insurrection. It is the accumulation of small, instrumental acts that will bring authority to its knees. Let us rise!

ringmasters of the vanguard) always find themselves hopelessly overtaken.

No More False Prophets

An understanding of previous movements for change is not merely an exercise in historical interpretation. Knowledge gained is the means by which we can understand how to take effective action, ourselves, today. When we recognise what has been, we can plan for what might be.

Movements that attempt to create a groundswell of opposition by initiating public (usually publicity seeking) protests will always meet with general indifference not because most people don't care, but because we are a lot more realistic about the utility of such initiatives than the protestors.

The art of the possible is discovered rather in those anonymous, immediate (but not by any means spontaneous) short run collective actions that apply the principles of guerrilla warfare to everyday life. Cryptic and, above all, *surreptitious actions* are best adapted to resist an opponent who can probably win any open confrontation. We must be ever ready to melt away as soon as faced with unfavourable odds.

Spontaneous forms of popular action can be, and are, deliberately chosen because of the tactical advantages for all those involved. What might be called "low intensity class warfare" is always pressing, testing and probing the boundaries of the permissible - so as to take swift advantage of any fissures that may open up in moments of crisis. It is not then our "incapacity" to sustain permanent political organisation (most sensible people vote with their feet and avoid these formations like the plague) but that the choice of fleeting, direct action represents a popular tactical wisdom developed in conscious response to the political constraints realistically faced. Anonymity and avoidance of formal organisations are enabling modes of resistance, a measure of our understanding of both the danger and the futility of spectacular mediated action.

While such action precludes formal organisation, it most certainly does not eschew effective co-ordination, achieved through the informal networks of affinity, kinship, traditional and intentional community, workplace and, yes, even perhaps ritual and religious practice. Socially embedded networks, developed at the level of the everyday, are as opaque to the authorities as they are indispensable to subversive activity. Let what's left of the Left engage in monumental plans for grandiose national - now even global - federations. (Federations and movements of what? Parades before the worlds TV cameras? No thanks.)

Effective subversion must be organised out of the gaze of domination,

SOME NOTES ON INSURRECTIONARY ANARCHISM

sasha k.

Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to all social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an ongoing praxis aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. We don't look to some ideal society or offer an image of utopia for public consumption. Throughout history, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have been insurrectionary anarchists. Most simply, this means that the state will not merely wither away, thus anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded. Here we spell out some implications that we and some other insurrectionary anarchists draw from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? It is, therefore, primarily a practice, and focuses on the organization of attack. These notes are in no way a closed or finished product; we hope they are a part of an ongoing discussion, and we most certainly welcome responses. Much of this comes straight from past issues of Insurrection *and pamphlets from Elephant Editions.*

1. *The State Will Not Just Disappear; Attack*

The State of capital will not "wither away," as it seems many anarchists have come to believe — not only entrenched in abstract positions of 'waiting,' but some even openly condemning the acts of those for whom the creation of the new world depends on the destruction of the old. Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise.

It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although propaganda has a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act.

The force of an insurrection is social, not military. The measure for evaluating the importance of a generalized revolt is not the armed clash, but on the contrary the amplitude of the paralysis of the economy, of normality.

2. *Self-activity versus managed revolt: from insurrection to revolution*

As anarchists, the revolution is our constant point of reference, no matter what we are doing or what problem we are concerned with. But the revolution is not a myth simply to be used as a point of reference. Precisely because it is a concrete event, it must be built daily through more modest attempts which do not have all the liberating characteristics of the social revolution in the true sense. These more modest attempts are insurrections. In them the uprising of the most exploited and excluded of society and the most politically sensitized minority opens the way to the possible involvement of increasingly wider strata of exploited on a flux of rebellion which could lead to revolution.

Struggles must be developed, both in the intermediate and long term. Clear strategies are necessary to allow different methods to be used in a coordinated and fruitful way.

Autonomous action: the self-management of struggle means that those that struggle are autonomous in their decisions and actions; this is the opposite of an organization of synthesis which always attempts to take control of struggle. Struggles that are synthesized within a single controlling organization are easily integrated into the power structure of present society. Self-organized struggles are by nature uncontrollable when they are spread across the social terrain.

3. *Uncontrollability versus managed revolt: the spread of attack*

It is never possible to see the outcome of a specific struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. The passage from the various insurrections — limited and circumscribed — to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any method.

What the system is afraid of is not these acts of sabotage in themselves, so much as their spreading socially. Every proletarianized individual who disposes of even the most modest means can draw up his or her objectives, alone or along with others. It is materially impossible for the State and capital to police the apparatus of control that operates over the whole social territory. Anyone who really wants to contest the network of control can make their own theoretical and practical contribution. The appearance of the first broken links coincides with the spreading of acts of sabotage. The anonymous practice of social self-liberation could spread to all fields, breaking the codes of prevention put into place by power.

Small actions, therefore, easily reproducible, requiring unsophisticated means that are available to all, are by their very simplicity and spontaneity

meant to be recordable, and they were often successful only insofar as they were invisible. The most successful poisoning of class oppressors, for example, are those never known as such. Just like the perfect crime, the subversive act seeks to escape all detection, cover its tracks and avoid appearance in the archives; for the perpetrators to strike (anonymously) again. Only those who wish to be martyrs, self-publicists or media personalities would wish to wait around to offer their names and have their picture taken.

Though the point, by its very nature, is impossible of proof, *apparent docility* is the measure of subterfuge, and is only broken by those crises of ruling class confidence that allow insurrectionary breakthrough. Our ability to capitalise on these favourable moments must be understood in the context of a long term struggle that is only successful insofar as it is invisible.

So a view of politics focused either on the official and formal relations of power (the command performances of consent), or on open protest and rebellion, represents a far too narrow concept of political life. The body of historical knowledge that we must grapple with is for the most part only a record of that which has broken through to the public sphere. There are undoubtedly important instructive events and occurrences among them which can give strength, through popular memory, to protest and resistance. But the lens of hindsight and reportage is a distorted mirror. “History” records what is most spectacular and most easily located: the start, the peaks, the decisive break with the past. We see the climax, the (only possibly decisive) invasion of public space. As such it implodes the development of movements of refusal and social transformation, for it freezes our attention on a single frame in time, disconnected from that which made it possible. As Dickens remarks in *Barnaby Rudge*: “We note the harvest more than the seed time.” Despite the claims of the media, these moments almost never come from nowhere; they are, rather, the acceleration of continuing processes through timely public manifestation. The agitation and preparation that precede and underpin the demonstrative act are *always* beginning and never end. It is at the point of certain rupture that the perpetrators of everyday acts of refusal consider it safe to appear on the public stage. Unless provoked by the State into desperate measures, open collective defiance is rarely undertaken unless it is practical and likely to succeed. Until that time, the mechanisms, structures and struggles which necessarily precede it remain a closed book.

It is the accumulation of “petty” acts of defiance and refusal that make critical upsurges possible. They are not a substitute for revolution but a necessary condition for it. That is why the insurrectionary moment invariably escalates so rapidly - “as if from nowhere” - and is why revolutionary elites (the clownish

WITHOUT A TRACE

Dominant culture rarely interests itself in evidence other than that which shows willing and enthusiastic complicity from its subjects. Acts of refusal and revolt are effaced from the historical record when they expose the tenuous control of authority. Even when they do appear, presence, motives and behaviour are all mediated through the lens of elite partiality which works to deny that we are capable of generating the ideas and means of our own liberation.

That much most of us recognise; it is the premise of class history developed in the 1960s by the likes of EP Thompson, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawn. But theirs is also a particularist history, focused as it is on the same level of *public appearance* as that of the Establishment. Just as real life is elsewhere than on television, so the history of resistance is at the very least written between the lines of the official record of leaders, followers and climatic events. In the interests of self-preservation, the ruling class and its official recorders - journalists and other such vermin whose social position depends upon the maintenance of class society - invariably work to keep attention only on a protests leaders (whether real or imaginary) and particularly on those with superior status or privilege.

But as well as those who lack the influence to have their words and actions recognised as important are those who have no intention whatsoever to be identified. It is this realm of individual and collective refusal that has proved the most resilient to exposure in the historical record.

A vast area of active political life is ignored for the simple fact that it takes place at a level we rarely recognise as political. Trained by the mass media to applaud the spectacular action rather than the incremental and prudent, all is in the appearance, the *image* of revolt as reproduced through that same mass media. But much political activity is elaborated among an intentionally restricted public that excludes or is hidden from the gaze of authority. So it is not only that the historical record is kept by elites, for elites, but that subversives themselves have an interest in concealment of their activities (for starters, this gives us greater personal security and self control). Such acts as these were never

uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency.

4. *Permanent conflictuality versus mediation with institutional forces*

Conflictuality should be seen as a permanent element in the struggle against those in power. A struggle which lacks this element ends up pushing us towards mediating with the institutions, grows accustomed to the habits of delegating and believing in an illusory emancipation carried out by parliamentary decree, to the very point of actively participating in our own exploitation ourselves.

There might perhaps be individual reasons for doubting the attempt to reach one's aims with violent means. But when non-violence comes to be raised to the level of a non-violable principle, and where reality is divided into 'good' and 'bad,' then arguments cease to have value, and everything is seen in terms of submission and obedience. The officials of the anti-globalization movement, by distancing themselves and denouncing others have clarified one point in particular: that they see their principles — to which they feel duty-bound — as a claim to power over the movement as a whole.

5. *Illegality; insurrection isn't just robbing banks*

Insurrectionary anarchism isn't a morality on survival: we all survive in various ways, often in compromise with capital, depending on our social position, our talents and tastes. We certainly aren't morally against the use of illegal means to free ourselves from the fetters of wage slavery in order to live and carry on our projects, yet we also don't fetishize illegalism or turn it into some kind of religion with martyrs; it is simply a means, and often a good one.

6. *Informal Organization; not professional revolutionaries or activists, not permanent organizations*

From party/union to self-organization:

– Profound differences exist within the revolutionary movement: the anarchist tendency towards quality of the struggle and its self-organization and the authoritarian tendency towards quantity and centralization.

– Organization is for concrete tasks: thus we are against the party, syndicate and permanent organization, all of which act to synthesize struggle and become elements of integration for capital and the state. Their purpose comes

to be their own existence, in the worst case they first build the organization then find or create the struggle. Our task is to act; organization is a means. Thus we are against the delegation of action or practice to an organization: we need generalized action that leads to insurrection, not managed struggles. Organization should not be for the defense of certain interests, but of attack on certain interests.

– Informal organization is based on a number of comrades linked by a common affinity; its propulsive element is always action. The wider the range of problems these comrades face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that the real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all takes place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization which gathers around a common affinity.

The anarchist minority and the exploited and excluded:

– We are of the exploited and excluded, and thus our task is to act. Yet some critique all action that is not part of a large and visible social movement as "acting in the place of the proletariat." They counsel analysis and waiting, instead of acting. Supposedly, we are not exploited alongside the exploited; our desires, our rage and our weaknesses are not part of the class struggle. This is nothing but another ideological separation between the exploited and subversives.

– The active anarchist minority is not slave to numbers but continues to act against power even when the class clash is at a low level within the exploited of society. Anarchist action should not therefore aim at organizing and defending the whole of the class of exploited in one vast organization to see the struggle from beginning to end, but should identify single aspects of the struggle and carry them through to their conclusion of attack. We must also move away from the stereotypical images of the great mass struggles, and the concept of the infinite growth of a movement that is to dominate and control everything.

– The relationship with the multitude of exploited and excluded cannot be structured as something that must endure the passage of time, i.e. be based on growth to infinity and resistance against the attack of the exploiters. It must have a more reduced specific dimension, one that is decidedly that of attack and not a rearguard relationship.

We can start building our struggle in such a way that conditions of revolt can emerge and latent conflict can develop and be brought to the fore. In this way a contact is established between the anarchist minority and the specific situation where the struggle can be developed.

7. *The individual and the social: individualism and communism, a false problem*

– We embrace what is best in individualism and what is best in communism.

– Insurrection begins with the desire of individuals to break out of constrained and controlled circumstances, the desire to reappropriate the capacity to create one's own life as one sees fit. This requires that they overcome the separation between them and their conditions of existence. Where the few, the privileged, control the conditions of existence, it is not possible for most individuals to truly determine their existence on their terms. Individuality can only flourish where equality of access to the conditions of existence is the social reality. This equality of access is communism; what individuals do with that access is up to them and those around them. Thus there is no equality or identity of individuals implied in true communism. What forces us into an identity or an equality of being are the social roles laid upon us by our present system. There is no contradiction between individuality and communism.

8. *We are the exploited, we are the contradiction: this is no time for waiting*

– Certainly, capitalism contains deep contradictions which push it towards procedures of adjustment and evolution aimed at avoiding the periodic crises which afflict it; but we cannot cradle ourselves in waiting for these crises. When they happen they will be welcomed if they respond to the requirements for accelerating the elements of the insurrectional process. As the exploited, however, we are the fundamental contradiction for capitalism. Thus the time is always ripe for insurrection, just as we can note that humanity could have ended the existence of the state at any time in its history. A rupture in the continual reproduction of this system of exploitation and oppression has always been possible.